2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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to enforcement by explicit or implicit sanctions—it prevailed only within the clan or a cluster of closely interrelated clans, or between individual kinsfolk of different clans. Even so, every line of social cleavage was a source of weakness to the sanctions of right. It needed very little temptation or provocation for men of different clans or maximal lineages, however close the links between their respective groups, to lay violent hands on one another's property, person, or dependants. There was a general atmosphere of non-cognizance of rights *as such*. Times of crisis, such as famine, brought about a relapse into lawlessness.

In consequence the ultimate sanction of jural rights outside the clan was self-help. If a man could not recover a wife who had been abducted or a bride-price debt owing to him through the intermediation of the elders of his clan and those of the abductor's or debtor's clan, he had the right to use self-help and make a raid on the cattle of the offender's clan. This was legitimate and reprisals were not allowed. If the offender were to attempt any, his clansmen would not support him. But these raids might result in an armed clash with the cattle herds. Men might be killed; and then war flared up.

But raiding (*yɔk*), as a measure of self-help, in itself was not an act of war. It led to war if men were killed, but not if there were no bloodshed. Sometimes, even if a raid ended in an affray and men were killed, a reconciliation was made before an interclan fight could develop. The Tallensi distinguished precisely between raiding, as a method of self-help which they considered a legitimate jural device for redressing a wrong, and warfare. The custom of raiding reinforced warfare because it provided occasions for armed clashes and because of the habit of mind that lay behind it. Though this habit ran counter to the moral repugnance of the Tallensi to shedding human blood, it tolerated the use of violence as the proper ultimate means of asserting one's rights. This attitude still survives, to some extent. Men still carry their weapons when they go on a journey. Disputes over wives or unpaid debts sometimes bring the parties to the brink of a sanguinary fight. One reason why these fights are suppressed by the natives themselves before they become serious is the fear of the white man with his armed police in the background. Another and more powerful reason is the system of chiefs' tribunals and District Commissioners' courts imposed by the British. This judicial system has become an established part of native life. It has provided an effectively sanctioned alternative to self-help and made the latter obsolete (cf. p. 13). But in the past the attitude of mind we have described led the natives to think of warfare in its corporate aspect as a mechanism for redressing wrongs that could not otherwise be put right. Considering their lack of a single, all-embracing government and their segmentary social structure, it was inevitable that conflicts should often arise that could only be settled by fighting.[1]

[1] In this connexion it is worth noting that the Tallensi have only one term, *nabor*, for every kind of fighting, from a quarrel between co-wives to a war. But, in addition, war was distinguished by referring to it euphemistically as 'arrows' (*ceema*). Thus a war is identified as 'the arrows of so-and-so', after its chief instigator.

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feeling of politico-ritual difference between them. It is the same within each cluster. The elders inaugurate the Festival season with many sacrifices asking the ancestors and the Earth to prevent fighting from breaking out between the young men, in spite of the truce, and they always depute a number of reliable young men to keep a good look-out during the dances lest unruly spirits stir up trouble. Thus the greater solidarity is built up on the lesser solidarities; and this principle applies throughout the social system.

The rhythm of Tale social life is contained within an annual cycle. It swings between two poles. For most of the year the sectional interests of lineage and clan dominate the pattern of collective life. But for one month the greater solidarity of the whole society prevails.

In relation to the mechanisms of unity and equilibrium Tale warfare appears as a negative sanction that reinforces their effects. It was the obverse of these mechanisms, the polar opposite of the idea of unity, arising out of the very same balance of social forces that makes that unity possible. Both in time and at a given time the equilibrium of Talé political life swung (and still swings) between two poles: on the one hand, the extraordinarily consistent and precise differentiation of social segments; on the other, the strong sense of unity created by the religious bonds of the society.

War or, more often, the threat of war was the most drastic means of bringing to a head and working off the frictions that inevitably arose from the action of the principle of social differentiation of corporate units; its effect, however, was to bring the opposite principle into action, and thus it served to strengthen the forces of social cohesion in the society at large.

Equilibrium and Solidarity within the Clan and Lineage

The pattern of solidarity we have been discussing applies at all levels of Tale social structure. Tensions similar to those we have discerned in the corporate relations between clans underlie corporate relations within clans and maximal lineages. Centrifugal tendencies and centripetal tendencies pull against one another. Conflicts within corporate units tend to follow the lines of lineage and local segmentation. They take the form of opposition between the solidarity of the segment and the wider solidarity of the lineage or clan. And the greater the relative autonomy of the segment, the deeper does the conflict tend to be. Hence conflicts in a composite clan tend to go deeper than conflicts in a genealogically unitary group such as a sub-clan of Mosuor biis. But, as in the social structure at large, the bonds of common interest, of mutual dependence in ritual and secular matters, and of local unity tend to prevail in the long run. However deep a breach may be, the dissidents never repudiate membership of the larger unit, for this would be tantamount to repudiating the ancestors. The ancestor cult is the supreme sanction of lineage and clan solidarity. Thus, at the best, conflicts are resolved by the eventual restoration of the *status quo ante*. At the worst, a new balance is struck between the centrifugal tendencies of lineage segmentation and the centripetal emphasis of the lineage structure as a whole backed by the ancestor cult. It is in this way that the structure of a lineage or clan is